

### Legislation Aimed at Putting Phony Clinics Out of Business

*Tougher Penalties, Asset Seizure, Funding for State Databases – At No Cost to Taxpayers*

**SARASOTA, FLA.** Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) today unveiled sweeping legislation to crack down on phony pain management clinics -- pill mills -- that have turned Florida into the nation's storefront for illegal narcotics.

Buchanan's bill, drafted in consultation with federal and state authorities, will double the penalties and triple the fines for drug violators and use assets seized to fund prescription drug databases in states like Florida. It also will reclassify one of the most abused and deadly narcotics to make it more difficult to obtain.

At least \$2.5 million was seized in one day last month when federal agents arrested 22 people for illegally distributing prescription drugs.

A key component of his bill will allow the Drug Enforcement Agency to use the assets seized from these drug dealers to enforce drug laws and will also support treatment programs and fund state databases to identify illegal activities. This is of particular importance to Florida, which has among the weakest regulations in the nation when it comes to prescription drug oversight. Florida also lacks funding for a statewide monitoring program -- a problem that would be addressed by Buchanan's bill.

Buchanan's bill also would toughen penalties for violations and change the classification for certain drugs to make them harder to prescribe and obtain.

"Many of these so-called pain clinics are nothing more than illegal drug distribution networks that bring untold misery to our children, our families and our communities," Buchanan said. "Today we take a crucial step toward putting them out of business."

Buchanan recently held a public forum with federal, state and local authorities discussing ways to combat the growing threat of illegal pill mills.

The Congressman's bill received immediate support from local law enforcement and families:

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight called the bill "responsive to the needs of law enforcement," adding, "enhanced legal remedies such as those included in this legislation are critical if we are going to discourage unscrupulous and rampant pill mill operations."

Ruth Lyerly of Families Against Addictive Drug Abuse said "After over eight years of debate in Tallahassee and seven plus people dying daily due to an unprecedented health and public safety crisis, we can all take a deep breath. Congressman Buchanan has taken serious action and more importantly has seen the urgency to do so."

Specifically, Buchanan's Bill would:

- Toughen federal penalties for pill mill operators by doubling the prison sentence from 10 to 20 years and tripling the fine from \$1 million to \$3 million.
- Stipulate assets seized from violators to be sold and the proceeds used: to fund drug monitoring databases in the states; to fund DEA enforcement actions against Pill Mills; and, to support drug treatment programs within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The DEA last month seized an estimated \$2.5 million in illicit assets owned by pill mill owners in South Florida.
- Reclassify hydrocodone combination drugs (one of the most addictive and dangerous drug mixtures) to make them a Schedule II drug that is more difficult to prescribe and obtain.

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### **Five Facts About Prescription Drugs & Pill Mills**

- 1) Florida is home to 1,300 pill mills – The most in the U.S.
- 2) Florida prescribes 10 times more oxycodone pills than all other states combined.
- 3) Seven people die every day in Florida from prescription drug abuse.
- 4) Florida has more pain clinics than McDonald's restaurants.
- 5) 22 Arrested and \$2.5 Million seized in Florida pill mill raid last month.